

facts on appearance

why do I sometimes get discoloured water?

Drinking water is supplied to very high standards of taste and appearance, but on very rare occasions the water can sometimes be discoloured or cloudy. Discolouration is caused mostly by rust deposits inside water mains. These can be dislodged if there is a change in the direction or speed of water in the mains, or if the main is disturbed, as the result of a burst, for example.

Discolouration can also come from rust in old galvanised iron service pipes. Service pipes connect your property to the water main in the road. The part that runs from the water main to the stop tap in the pavement is the responsibility of Severn Trent in most cases; the part of the service pipe that runs from the stop tap in the pavement to the property is the house owner's responsibility to maintain.

Occasionally the natural characteristics of the water itself may give the water a yellow or brownish tint. These types of water can come from upland peaty areas or from groundwater sources with a high natural iron content. However, Severn Trent Water treatment processes are designed to remove such colour.

is discoloured water harmful?

Water discoloured by rust particles has still undergone treatment at the supply works and in our experience is not harmful to health. Obviously, customers receiving discoloured water may prefer not to drink it.

Rust particles can cause a nuisance on occasions, by staining washing or blocking ball valves.

what is Severn Trent Water doing about discolouration?

Severn Trent Water has replaced or renovated over 13,000 km of mains over the past 15 years.

We also have an extensive programme of mains cleaning operations which remove rust deposits.

The mains cleaning programme is targeted at those areas considered to be at higher risk of receiving discoloured water should a main burst or a change in speed or direction of water flow occur. Improved treatment processes have been installed at many treatment works to ensure that any naturally occurring colour in the untreated water is removed. ➤

what causes the water to appear milky or cloudy?

Sometimes water can appear milky or cloudy if it contains tiny bubbles of air. If water is run into a glass they disappear if left standing for a minute or so, clearing from the bottom upwards as the bubbles rise to the top.

Air can enter the water from the mains, or it can be drawn through a faulty plumbing fitting such as a loose tap gland. The air is dissolved under pressure and released as millions of tiny bubbles when the tap is run. Sometimes you can cure the problem simply by tightening a tap gland nut. In all cases the air is totally harmless.

is there a standard for appearance?

Appearance is governed by standards for colour and turbidity. Turbidity is a measure of the amount of solid particles suspended in the water and colour is a measure of dissolved material. For the vast majority of the time our supplies fall well within these standards, and the water is clear and bright.

what should I do if my tap water is discoloured?

Contact our Customer Relations department on freephone 0800 783 4444, they will advise you of any action to take.